

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this Application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of acrylic acid comprising a step of introducing a mixed gas containing propylene and molecular oxygen into a first reaction zone packed with a complex oxide catalyst having molybdenum and bismuth as essential components and oxidizing propylene and obtaining an acrolein-containing gas, a step of introducing said acrolein-containing gas into a second reaction zone packed with a complex oxide catalyst having molybdenum and vanadium as essential components and obtaining an acrylic acid-containing gas, and a step of introducing said acrylic acid-containing gas into an acrylic acid absorption column and causing it to contact an absorbent water thereby obtaining an acrylic acid-containing solution which comprises the steps of

(a) said first reaction zone and said second reaction zone being formed in a single reactor by dividing reaction tubes with at least one perforated tube plate,

(b) said mixed gas for introduction into said first reaction zone having a propylene concentration in the range of 7 - 15 vol. % and a water concentration in the range of 0 - 10 vol. %, and

(c) said absorbent water is introduced into said acrylic acid absorption column at a mass flow rate in the range of 0.1 - 1.5 times the mass flow rate of propylene introduced into said first reaction zone, and

(d) said acrylic acid-containing solution obtained in said acrylic acid absorption column having a water concentration in the range of 1 - 45 wt. %.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein a main component of said absorbent water is water.

4. (Currently Amended) A method for the production of acrylic acid comprising a step of introducing a mixed gas containing propylene and molecular oxygen into a first reaction zone packed with a complex oxide catalyst having molybdenum and bismuth as essential components

and oxidizing propylene and obtaining an acrolein-containing gas, a step of introducing said acrolein-containing gas into a second reaction zone packed with a complex oxide catalyst having molybdenum and vanadium as essential components and obtaining an acrylic acid-containing gas, and a step of introducing said acrylic acid-containing gas into an acrylic acid absorption column and causing it to contact an absorbent water thereby obtaining an acrylic acid-containing solution which comprises the steps of

(a) said first reaction zone and said second reaction zone being formed in a single reactor by dividing reaction tubes with at least one perforated tube plate,

(b) said propylene concentration of said mixed gas introduced into said first reaction zone being in the range of 7 - 15 vol. % and the water concentration in said mixed gas being in the range of 0 - 10 vol. %, and

(c) said absorbent water to be introduced is 0.1 - 1.5 times the mass flow amount of propylene introduced into said first reaction zone, and

(d) said water concentration of said acrylic acid-containing solution obtained in the acrylic acid absorption column being adjusted to a level in the range of 1 - 45 wt. % by adjusting the amount of an absorbent water to be introduced.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Previously Presented) A method for the production of polyacrylic acid comprising the step of polymerizing the acrylic acid obtained by the method set forth in claim 1.

7. (Previously Presented) A method for the production of polyacrylic acid comprising using the acrylic acid obtained by the method set forth in claim 3.